

Juan County. The *Silverton Standard & the Miner* is published every Thursday by the San Juan County Historical Society. Our mailing address is P.O. Box 8, Silverton, CO 81433

Periodicals postage paid at Silverton, Colo.

USPS #496-880

Postmaster, send address changes to: P.O. Box 8, Silverton, CO 81433

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Subscriptions are \$24 per year for Silverton residents; \$48 per year for all other deliveries by U.S. mail. Digital e-mail delivery is available at \$26 per year.

#### Our goals

The *Silverton Standard & the Miner* is a weekly newspaper written for people interested in the issues and news of Silverton, Colo., and the surrounding San Juan Mountains region. The *Standard* voices a strong sense of community for Silverton and the San Juans as it brings you the issues, characters, landscapes, and the talent of the region. Stressing in-depth, balanced, and thought-

Last week there was a meeting with the San Juan County commissioners regarding sheep ranchers' use of large attack dogs that protect the various sheep herds grazing in the county.

There have been an increasing number of incidents involving threats and attacks upon hikers and bicyclists by these large dogs. A number of people have had to defend themselves against the attacks, some have been bitten and their family dogs mauled. Many backcountry enthusiasts have said that they are afraid to go anywhere that the sheep are grazing because of the danger from the attack dogs.

Instead of using the smaller less aggressive herding dogs the ranchers advocate the use of larger "livestock guardian dogs" to protect their herds because they are no longer allowed to use poison or traps to kill off predators. The dogs have been bred to protect their herds from any animal that appears to pose

a threat, including the perceived threat from humans.

Anyone nearing a herd is seen as an attacker and will be treated accordingly. It is only a matter of time before there is an incident like the one that happened in the Vail area where a woman was pulled off her bicycle and severely mauled by two Great Pyrenees. What if a family with small children is confronted by these dogs? Will the dogs see the children as a threat also?

We are potentially in a "put the traffic light in after the accident" scenario. Putting up signs warning hikers about the dogs is a poor solution. It is time to ask the ranchers to use a less aggressive type of dog so that a terrible accident does not occur in the backcountry. Better yet, maybe it is time to seriously question why sheep are being allowed to graze the fragile environment of the backcountry in the first place.

Realistically, the use of the backcountry in the San Juans has changed immensely in the

past few years. The county's largest industry and employed several hundred people.

Large sheep herds, numbering in the tens of thousands were allowed to graze in just about every gulch in the county. With the shutting down of the Sunnyside mine in 1991 and the layoffs accompanying it, the county's predominate industry became tourism.

Tourists are coming here in ever greater numbers to enjoy the backcountry through a wide variety of uses including four wheeling, dirt biking, hiking, fishing, and backpacking. One of the most common complaints I hear from them is about the sheep grazing in the backcountry and their impact upon visitor's enjoyment of the backcountry.

I have spent over thirty years hiking, four-wheeling and dirt biking in the San Juans. Every year, several hikes were spoiled by the herd of sheep that had

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# Creek problem largely natural

By "Zeke" Zanon

After reading page after page of hype in the *Silverton Standard* and the *Durango Herald* papers concerning Superfund that is being pushed at Gladstone, I could feel my frustration turning to anger. Almost everything written was either half-truths or scrambled with statements not even pertaining to the issue.

I feel someone needs to give at least one viewpoint to the other side of the story. Here's mine:

Yes, there is some heavy metals loading from the mines, but if the EPA were to be honest they would admit that there is also a higher percentage of *natural* metals loading into Cement Creek *not* coming from the abandoned mines in the area. Much of this is from the many iron bogs found throughout the Cement Creek drainage, natural springs as well as drainage from the east side of the Red Mountain District. All one has to do is drive up the Cement Creek road and look at the banks of the creek and you will know why the first settlers named it Cement Creek.

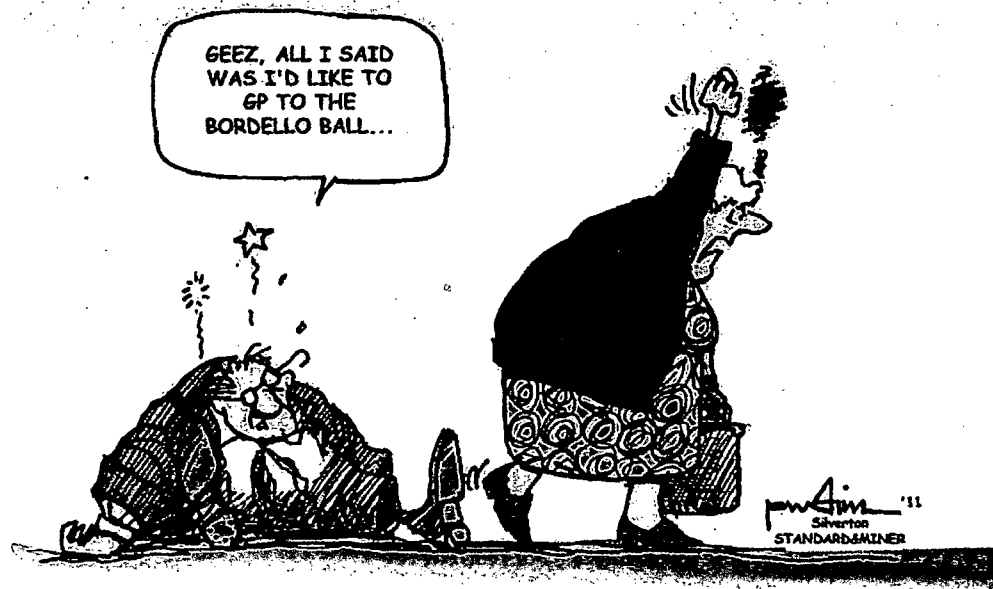
Although I don't have a copy

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#### FROM THE STANDARD MAIL CAR



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Nature's beauty is...

### Funding available to help you stay warm

Energy Outreach Colorado (EOC) has awarded San Juan County with a \$10,000 grant. This grant is to help cover costs of coal, electric, firewood, natural gas, oil, propane, and solid fuel pellets.

You must meet the eligibility criteria to be considered for

this program, which includes applying for LEAP first. Anyone interested in this program can come by the Social Services office or call Deanna Jaramillo at 387-5631 to get an application.

"We have approximately \$4,000 left to spend by the end of October 2011," Jaramillo said.

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NEBRASKA

### ZEKE, from Page 2

of their report to give quotes, this was proven by a U.S. Geological Survey study and report submitted in the late 1990s. I'm sure the EPA is quite aware of this study, but never mentions it.

The EPA is a typical federal bureaucracy in the sense that it tells the public only what it wants them to hear — not really lying, but twisting the facts or leaving out things that should be in their reports and explained to the public. Let me comment on some that come to mind.

Assuming this treatment plant were to be built, there would be a large accumulation of sludge in its settling ponds over time. This would amount to hundreds of tons of material that would have to be pumped out every month or two and transported. Who will pay these costs and where would it be deposited?

Has the general public, who

are not familiar with water treatment plants, been informed that the small amount of clean water (in comparison) coming from the plant will be dumped back into an already naturally polluted river? By the time Cement Creek dumps into the Animas River there will be little difference from what we have now.

Has the EPA mentioned that Cement Creek (or do they know themselves) runs red for days after heavy rains on the Ohio Peak area, with mudslides running entirely down to the creek with heavy mineral contamination?

Does the general public (particularly those in Durango) know that Cement Creek is the east side drainage for the Red Mountains? And as beautiful as they may appear, they are highly contaminated with iron and other heavy metals.

Has the public been informed

that if this Superfund catastrophe were to take place the bulldozers would roll and abolish all remaining mine dumps within its boundaries, cover the sites with topsoil and plant grass? Not only would this eliminate any chance of these mines reopening, but it would also wipe out a good part of our mining heritage. A very disgraceful example of this is what the EPA has done to the Leadville mining district.

Has it been calculated what the stigma of a Superfund would do to our tourism industry?

Then there is the fish thing, implying that the mines have killed everything in the river. Being a fly fisherman myself, I would love to see gold medal fishing in the upper Animas, but I'm also a realist. Although the high lakes are normally good fishing, most all of the rivers — including the Animas — have proven otherwise, from day one.

Let me give one historical example:

The San Juan County Historical Society has a diary written by George Howard (whom Howardsville is named after) from 1872. This was two years before the Town of Silverton was founded. There is a page where he had written that he and a group decided to travel to the "western mountains" (Telluride area) on a prospecting trip. Returning several weeks later, they stopped at a lake (probably Trout Lake) to do some fishing. There they caught about 250 fish which they packed back to the Silverton area. Once back, the fish sold for \$1.50 a dozen. To put this story in perspective, wages at the time were \$3 a day. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure what this diary implies.

It should be pointed out to the non-historians that this was a period of time when the mines were in their prospecting stage, with little production, and there were NO mills that would have been depositing waste tailings into the rivers.

The whole thing makes one wonder if the EPA is qualified, or should even be allowed, to make the sole final judgment on a program that will cost the taxpayers millions upon millions of dollars, with no end in sight and nothing in return.

They tell us that this Superfund will be paid for with monies submitted by the oil industry. Even if the initial costs are from this source, it is not a bottomless pit of money. Treating water is a forever thing. This always eventually falls back on the taxpayer.

Then there are those who think throwing money at the problem solves the problem. Come on, give us a break!

Having the EPA and its sub-groups evaluating the so-called polluted Cement Creek drainage with their biased attitude is like asking the fox if he would guard the chicken coop.

There is much more that could be written on the subject, but to sum it up, the last thing this county needs is the EPA and their Superfund.

I would think the county commissioners would take a strong stand against this Superfund and start asking some questions themselves. It's one more thing slipping away from them.

"Zeke" Zannoni is a resident of Silverton.

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